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POETRY AND ITS CORRUPTIONS.

TO say a few words on poetry, " that nurse of every virtue," may not perhaps be to misemploy our time ; and to present them to our readers, may not be to call their attention to an ungrateful theme. So much poetry has been written, and so much too has been written on poetry, that nothing very novel can be expected either of theory or illustration. We do not therefore offer the following remarks, as very bold candidates for the praise of originality, and should they be allowed the credit of justness, we shall be fully content.

In our reflections upon poetry, the first question that occurs is, ' What is it ?' Of most of the sciences and arts the definition at least is sufficiently known, and if they are attended with any difficulty, it is in the pursuit of their studies, and the cultivation of their objects ; and not in the ascertaining of their end or design. But in the subject before us, we are arrested on the threshold of our inquiries, for want of a definition, on which they may be founded, and to which they may be referred. Some* have called it the language of passion. But we could quote a great deal of po-

* See Blair's Rhetorick.

etry, which has nothing in it of passion ; which is the voice of the coolest reason, and of the most deliberate moderation. A great part of didactick poetry excludes passion from its characteristicks, and even works of most fantastick fiction must be bound together by a chain of plain sense and coherence. Similar objections may be made to the definition of Aristotle and Plato, which makes Fiction the essence of poetry. For the truth is (notwithstanding the fine saying of Waller), it is the study of nature,* which qualifies, and it is the representation of nature, which denotes the true poet. Neither is poetry necessarily or peculiarly Imitation. Other arts, as Dr. Blair says, imitate life. Manners and men may be imitated in prose ; and poetry does a great deal besides imitate.

From some consideration of the several definitions, which have been given, and from reflection upon the subject, we are induced to define poetry, *Measured composition.* If it be objected to this definition, that there is a great deal of measured composition, which is miserably dull and unpoetical, we reply, that there is bad poetry as well as good ; and that by ennobling our sonetteers, our ode makers, and rhymers with the name of poets, we imply no recommendation of their labours or admiration of their works. Should it again be objected, that there is a great deal of *unmeasured* composition, which ought to be called poetry, (for instance, literal translations of Homer, Virgil, and Tasso), we must answer, that to grant such writings to be poetry will make the term too comprehensive, and will include under it judicial pleas, parliamentary speeches, and popular orations or harangues : since the sentiments of these performances are frequently of the loftiest cast of eloquent feel-

* Dr. Johnson says, " whatever (in nature) is beautiful, and whatever " is dreadful, must be familiar to his imagination : he must be conver- " sant with all that is awfully vast, or elegantly little."

ing. If then we will be content to allow, and who will deny it? that there is bad poetry, and to acknowledge, and who will not confess it? that there is eloquent prose, we may be satisfied with this definition, viz. *Poetry is composition measured by regular feet.*

So powerful is the influence of poetry, so irresistibly may it, in a skilful hand, move the passions, and impress the understanding, that he who is gifted with it should be considered as under a solemn responsibility, to dedicate it first of all to truth. It is a voice that speaks to the soul.

> Il cantar, che nell' anima si sente!
> Il piu ne sente l'alma, il men l'orecchio:

And to attune that voice to the notes of falsehood, immorality, and vice, to enlist its potency under the banner of corruption, is to prostrate a noblest energy of our nature. These are not the reflections of the dull moralist; but the expressions which are forced from the wise and good, at the perusal of works of taste. So often has elegant writing been made the vehicle of subverting doctrines of morality and politicks, that they rejoice to know that poetry has been blotted with few stains. But so formidable is the alliance of literature and vice, that they tremble for the day, when poetry shall be an atheist, an infidel, or a jacobin. Should the time ever come when any other voice than that of truth shall sound in the temple of poetry, when the altars of the Muses shall be polluted with the sacrifice of perverse principles or depraved affections, farewell to innocence and purity, to noble sentiments, to lofty conceptions, to all that is sublime in thought or expression.

But besides the degradation, which poetry suffers when it is made the instrument of vice, there is another hardly less afflicting to the delicacy of its votaries, and hardly less repugnant to the purity of its nature. However the vocation of the Satirist may have been exalted, by those whose

it is, his warfare seems as abhorrent to the vehicle of his censures, as the rashness of Phaeton to the equitable moderation of the chariot of the sun. It may indeed be inquired, how the poet can vindicate the cause of truth, and thereby perform the most indispensable of his duties, unless he attack vice in the strong holds of her shamelessness? It must be answered, just as the good man preserves the consistency of his character, without sallying forth like a chivalrous knight errant, to defeat the oppressor, and release the captive. Who does not turn with disgust from the Satires of Juvenal, Persius, or Horace, to the Lyricks and Epistles of the latter, to Virgil, or to Tibullus? Who would waste his time in the perusal of Aristophanes, that might rove with Theocritus through the pastures of Sicily, or accompany Ulysses in his glories and through his toils. There is something in the harshness, severity, and virulence of satire, which is utterly repulsive to the serene majesty of poetry. Discord, altercation, and confusion should vanish at the approach of poetry, as the fury of the waves at the ascent of Neptune:

—Summâ placidum caput extulit undâ,
————tumida æquore placat,
Collectasque fugat nubes, solemque reducit.

Not less grating to the ear of taste are the disputes of party and the controversies of polemicks, when presumptuously modulated to the strains of poetry. We feel as if we perceived a great injustice, when what was given to charm all mankind, is contracted to the narrow limits of sect or faction. Οι Θεοι, οικτειραντες ανθρωπων, τας Μουσας εδοσαν. And shall we dare to confine this catholick present to the enjoyment of a few? Shall the musick of poetry be harmony only to a favoured few, while to all the rest it is discord and harshness?

Aspro concento, orribile armonia
D' alte querele, d'ululi, e de strida,
Instranamente concordar s'udia!

To allude to an instance recent and popular, how unpleasant, if not uninteresting, are the "Religious sects" of the BOROUGH compared with its descriptions of nature, its affecting pictures, its appeals to the passions and the heart. And how inferiour is the poem of the Borough in general, of which so much is tediously local, and minutely temporary, to the charming LIBRARY and imaginary VILLAGE. It is indeed an act of cruel partiality, to deprive the noblest strains of that admiration, which they might claim from all who could understand them, by consecrating them to a school, a party, or a sect. Let the only cause, which poetry patronizes, be that of eternal truth, impartial nature, and universal justice. For them she will be an able, and acceptable advocate; recommended by them her influence shall spread, subdue, and enthral; her votaries shall multiply, and her shrine be crowded.

There is one more corruption of poetry which we will here mention. It is that which is the sin of the dunce. It is this too, which, perhaps more than any other, prevails at this day. There is something so charming in the exertions, and so alluring in the reputation of the poet, that his honours have been claimed by hundreds of thousands, who never felt the fire of his fancy, or glowed with the raptures of his genius.

"Phillidas, Hypsipylas, et vatum plorabile si quid."

The mania has gone abroad, and inflamed, ever since there was a good poet. Not a hero has died, but has been murdered and remurdered, not a sheep has cropped the grass but has been made to do it to repletion, "not a mountain rears "its head unsung" by epick and lyrick, in pathetick and descriptive. "Ματαιολογων φημα προυπτατο Ἑλλαδα μυσοπολων, "σοφας επιφθονον τιχνας ονειδος." Did the injury terminate here, it would perhaps be more tolerable; but the worst is, such encouragement is given to poetasters, by the opulent MÆCE-

NATES of our times, that modest merit and diffident bards are passed by forgotten or neglected. The laurel has been but once given to Petrarch; how often has wealth and fame crowned the impudent insignificance of the heroes of the Dunciad and Baviad?

From the preceding remarks we may collect the character of a good poet.

The first characteristick of a good poet, is to be a good man. His vows must be paid to truth, and his exertions devoted to justice, before he can obtain the character of a good poet, or wear the garlands which mark his fame. To be ever didactick and ever grave the strictest rule does not require. Nay, on the airiest wing of fancy may the poet soar, in his flights of inspiration. Every thing that is lively, delicate, and beautiful, will recommend his labours to the approbation of taste. For all that is lively, or delicate, or beautiful, belongs to virtue. They have no connexion or affinity with the dull depravity, the gross corruption, and the horrid deformity of vice. Let then the poet be a good man. It were next desirable that his verse might not be the vehicle of the contention and acerbity of satire. May not the grossly vicious and flagrantly profligate be reclaimed by the rigid discipline of the law! And for those who are more nicely criminal, for those whose vice is so artfully lubricious, that it eludes the legal grasp, "leave them to heaven." The good poet will not be content, that his opinions be correct, he will make them acceptable to all classes of good men. He will not

"————————narrow his mind,
"Nor to party give up, what was meant for mankind."

He will employ that power, which can charm the human mind, however defended and concealed by the trenches and curtains of prejudice, in speaking to the judgment, with the voice of truth, in enlivening the imagination by the vivacity

of fancy, and in melting the tender sensibilities by appeals to the affections.

If then to moral goodness, and superiority to the quarrelsome rudeness of invective and satire, and contempt of the monopolizing spirit of uncharitable party, we add the natural talents of invention, judgment, wit, and fancy, the acquired graces of various knowledge, and a patient disposition of laborious application, we have a good poet. One whose works will survive his life and language, and will bloom in the eternal verdure of beauties, which depend not on local or personal interpretation, which speak to the perceptions of the unchanging mind of man, and which will claim admiration forever. To such a man how poor and diminutive is the wealth of commerce, and the magnificence of power! His interest and his vocation lift him above time and place, he labours for immortality, and death is the commencement of his glory.

Non è manibus illis,
Non è tumulo, fortunatâque favillâ,
Nascentur violæ?

THE CONVERSION OF WESSEX.

OSWAL was the name of one of the kings of Mercia. He had succeeded to the throne, in times of turbulence and anarchy, but the respect which his subjects entertained for his family, his wonderful decision of conduct, his cool prudence, and fearless courage reduced to quiet submission the insubordination of his Thanes, and subjected to discipline their uncivilized vassals. His lords and earls soon began to love him, for prudent severity conciliates the esteem of the rough and hardy; and his soldiers delighted in the regularity of their campaigns, the value of their arms, and the glory of their reputation, acquired under King Oswal. His fame soon spread,

his prowess became formidable, and the kings of the Britons and high Thanes of Wessex trembled at his name. In former times, the Mercian princes, though amiable as men, and beloved by their subjects, were little distinguished as generals, and less as conquerors. Ethelred of Britain, and Albert of Wessex had, twenty years before the ascent of Oswal, united their arms, and, in an incursion into Mercia, swept its fields, and pillaged its castles. The day of retribution was now arrived. Oswal upon some misunderstanding with the hostile princes, sent forth his heralds, summoned the Thanes with their retainers, and placing himself at their head, advanced to Wessex. After a march of deliberate rapidity, he arrived at its capital. The lines of circumvallation were drawn, and the city was invested in the rude fashion of the time. Reduced to extremity, the besieged resorted to every method, which could appease the anger, awaken the compassion, or soften the resentment of their adversary. Their women and their children, the hoary priests and priestesses of the Druidical rites, with their mystical standards, moved in procession to the sound of strange and dreadful musick, to the ramparts of the city. Unmoved by their concessions, their submission, and their woes, Oswal pressed the siege. The besiegers, reduced to the last resort, assembled themselves in the council house, to consult on their situation. All were bid to come ; men, women, and children. The spacious hall was thronged with anxious multitudes, and silence prevailed through the assembly. Tormenting solicitude racked the thoughts of the most decided, the bravest almost feared, the weak and the timid sunk to despair. The voice of a venerable Thane at last broke the painful silence. " My friends and fellow-citi-
" zens, in the days of my youth our city was attacked by the
" kings of the North. Our numbers were small and our
" skill was inferiour. The dark wings of ruin already shad-

" ed our walls and our streets were hushed in the silence " of impending destruction. At this fearful time, the aw- " ful priest of our tremendous religion approached, at the " dead of night, the mystick caves. The earth rocked and " the thunders muttered at his entrance. In the fury of in- " spiration he rushed back from the shrine, and proposed to " his fellow citizens the sacrifices they must make. His " voice was obeyed. The rites were performed, the deity " was appeased, and the arms of Wessex were successful. " The enemy returned to their hills, few in number, and " blushing with shame. Now, my friends, let us yet bear up. " Let us animate our fainting spirits, and nerve our droop- " ing arms, let us keep the enemy at bay, and see whether " we may not yet propitiate our awful deities." This counsel was accepted, the priest approved it, and the assembly dissolved. At midnight, the high priest approached the spacious cavern. Clouds and gloomy darkness hung their veils round the sky: the northwinds blew from the highlands, and the elements seemed to sympathize in the confusion of the besieged. The eternal fire glimmered faintly in the vaults of the cavern, and its trembling bickering flame was the fearful omen of imminent ruin. When the magick songs had been chanted and the mystick dance performed, the Arch Druid with his assistants, attended by two wretched victims, descended to the lower cave, to the horrid alter of human blood. The king of Wessex waited in the upper cavern. Strange sounds of no human articulation, groans of agony, shouts of delirious laughter, the crackling of subterranean fires, and a thick sulphureous smoke indicated the performance of the fearful rites, at the shrine beneath his feet. All at once the fire in the vaults burnt up brightly, with a flaming light and steady flame. The Druid and his assistants ascended, unattended by the two victims, stained with blood and with a haggard look the Arch-Druid ap-

proached the king. " An awful vow of sacrifice have I " made, the safety of thy kingdom rests upon its perform- " ance, wilt thou ratify it, king Albert?" Albert trembled as he heard, but bowed his head, in the incurious submission of despair. Having ascended to the upper world, and reported the result of their ceremonies, the Arch-Druid again assembled the people, and declared the conditions on which they were to expect the protection of their gods. They were, that for seven nights, those ceremonies should be performed at the profoundest altar, which had alone been able to obtain even this dreadful answer. Two victims were thus to be sacrificed, every night for a week, that the arms of the Mercians might be turned from Wessex. The lots were prepared, and terrour and anguish, indescribable and unutterable, sat on every brow. The mother clasped her infant closer lest it should be for the last time. The poor father kissed his son, as though gasping on his death bed. The fatal urn was scrutinized, and the names of the sufferers declared. Six gloomy days had passed, and twelve lives had sunk under the hand of the Arch-Druid. The seventh sun arose, the last that was to shine on Alwy and Bertha. These lovely sufferers, the children of an aged father, regretted not their death, except that it withdrew the staff of support from the feeble steps of his infirm age. Hour after hour rolled by, and the last sun of Alwy and Bertha had set. Dissolved in tears, by turns distracted and mute with benumbing anguish, the poor children clung round the neck of their tortured father. Sixteen years had scarce nerved the arm of this son of his old age. But with sixteen years must his life be terminated. The ministers of death came on their awful errand. They bore the children from their father's arms, and hurried them on to the cave. Placed before the altar in the deepest cavern, they behold strange sights of inconceivable terrour. The pale blue torches, which gleamed

round the walls, the mournful sighs that sounded through the air, and the horrid musick of the cursed gong almost broke their spirits. When the minister of these infernal rites of inhuman cruelty had muttered his incantations, and burned his drugs and roots, he approached Alwy. Terrour may animate, when Reason would despair. Alwy rushed from the cave, flew through the streets, leapt the wall, and reaching the Mercian camp, prostrated himself at the knees of King Oswal. He told him his story, his escape from death, and the danger of his sister. Oswal sounded his trumpets, arrayed his troops, advanced to the walls, and burst the gates, in the confusion of the search for Alwy. The citizens, dispirited at the desertion of their gods, surrendered themselves at discretion, and wept as they saw the Mercian ensigns planted in triumph over the hall of their fathers. Alwy, at the head of a chosen band, burst the unhallowed penetralia of mystick superstition, and rescued his sister, whose sacrifice had been delayed by his own escape. Oswal commanded the citizens to collect in the publick square, and thus addressed them: "The fortune "which ever awaits the arms of just warfare has given me "the victory. It has saved the life of this courageous youth, "and restored him with his sister to the feeble years of his "father. Savage men! did you think that success and "glory in war were to be bought by the tears of aged misery, and the effusion of youthful blood? Go and demolish "your cursed altars, break the arch of your horrid cavern, "and obliterate every vestige of its existence. Wash clean "your hands of the foul stains of this week, and welcome "the wise strangers from the east. Hear their tidings of "peace, and receive their religion of purity. Learn that to "be good is to be happy, and that blood will buy but guilt "and woe."

THE JESUITS.

THE Jesuits have perhaps justly been styled the most learned body that ever existed. They published numerous editions of the classics which displayed the profoundest erudition, and gave the order a reputation which no other could boast. By their talents they acquired an astonishing influence in the European courts, and many important political measures are attributed to their instigation. The famous bull Unigenitus, which condemned the principles of the Jansenists, was issued by the pontiff at the pressing solicitation of the Jesuits, and though it was opposed by the parliament and the archbishop of Paris and by a great number of the clergy, Lewis XIV was so entirely under the government of these intriguing and artful religionists, that he enforced the bull throughout all France. What rendered them most dangerous and probably contributed to accelerate their downfall, was the singular constitution of their society, so totally unlike that of all other religious orders belonging to the Church of Rome. They knew little of the painful mortifications of the Carmelites, or of the humble piety of the Franciscans. Prayers and penance made little of their employment; and they were oftener busying themselves in the affairs of a secular power, than chanting their vespers in a cell. Their rules not requiring retirement and seclusion from the world, they availed themselves of every opportunity to amass wealth, and to enrich their treasury. They were merchants as well as politicians, and could, with equal ease, carry on a trade with the island of Martinico, and an intrigue at the court of Versailles. In whatever they undertook, (and they undertook almost every thing) they were zealous and indefatigable. Their missionaries explored the remotest parts of Asia, and were remarkable for their activ-

ity in gaining proselytes to the Catholick faith. They even directed their attention to America, and formed a settlement in the province of Paraguay, where they at first devoted themselves to the instruction of the Indians in the knowledge of religion as well as in the arts of life; but zeal for the faith was soon forgotten in the thirst for gold. Of this, immense sums were annually exported to Europe, and they have been suspected of contemplating the establishment of an independent empire, from their attempt to cut off all communication with the Spanish and Portuguese provinces in their neighbourhood, and from their exertions to instill into natives the utmost abhorrence for those nations. Their ambition, their arts, and chicane at length accomplished their own destruction, by turning against them those very princes over whom they once exercised a most powerful and irresistible influence. The brief for their final suppression was signed by Pope Clement XIV, on the twenty-first of July, 1773.

The services of the Jesuits in various departments of learning can never be forgotten. Their labours in the cause of classical literature, particularly their commentaries on the classicks, entitle them to the gratitude of every scholar. At Rome they had the principal share in the education of youth; they were esteemed the wisest and the most learned instructers, and their colleges were the resort of the adept, as well as of the proficient, in every branch of knowledge. Voltaire has indeed asserted that, though the order has produced men eminent in every species of literature and science, it never has produced an universal genius. But we are to attribute their very eminence to the undivided application of their powers; for never should we have seen such masterly minds making such wonderful aud successful efforts, if the labours of every individual had been dissipated in a variety of pursuits. Critical disquisitions on the writings of the an-

cients require not only the acutest mind, but the most unwearied exertion. The most extensive, and various, and painful researches are necessary, not only to determine the text, but often to explain the meaning; and surely we must renounce all pretensions to the character of scholars, if we say, that the time of an individual was misemployed, which was exclusively devoted to the illustration of those writings, which we profess to admire as fruits of the loftiest genius, and which we ought to study as repositories of the profoundest learning, and models of the purest taste.

On the whole, whatever may have been the misconduct of the Jesuits, which at length terminated in their suppression, we repeat it, the order deserves the reverence of scholars, for it was the friend of letters. If they did not exercise the austere self-denial, they cannot be charged with the ignorance and sloth, of other monks. If they did not, in the fervour of fanaticism, retire from the world, the circumstance ought to be considered as most fortunate for the interests of literature. Instead of sleeping out an useless existence in the cloisters of Europe, they were professors in its universities, or instructers to its potentates. Of modern learning they were the most useful and active promoters. The French Journals, which furnished the ablest criticisms and analyses of the publications of the age, were principally conducted by them. Their periodical works, as well as their personal reputation, gave them great influence with the literati of Europe;—their defences of religion, too, were formidable to the combination of infidels in France, and Voltaire and his associates trembled at the thunders of the Journal de Trevoux. It is not wonderful, therefore, that they incurred the hatred of the enemies of their religion, and were accused of wishing to keep mankind in infancy, in order to govern with absolute sway. It cannot be denied that they were ambitious; and it was because their ambition knew no

bounds, and would admit of no controul, that they fell a sacrifice alike to the suspicions of princes, and to the resentment of priests. Had they confined themselves to the peaceful regions of literature, we might have been permitted still to admire their talents, and to be edified by their learning; but we can now only lament the depravation of moral and intellectual feeling, which suffered the Vandals of the revolution to banish, with the lawful government of France, her muses and her literary glory.*

THE UNIVERSAL GENIUS.

NEXT to wayward indolence and apathy, perhaps the most inveterate enemy to real improvement is the disposition which pervades too many minds, to grasp at universal knowledge and excellence. The maxim of Dr. Johnson, that "where much is attempted something will be performed," is, on the whole, but little more than an uninstructive truth, and calculated to produce no very beneficial effects in any department of life. Though we assent to its certainty, yet we do not hesitate to declare, that much *more* will be perfectly performed, when only moderate designs are conceived, and moderate exploits undertaken with systematical and prudent exertions.

There is one disadvantage attending the profession of a scholar at the present period of the world, which will probably increase with increasing ages, unless some method be

* The deplorable state of classical learning in France is well known; and it must be a source of regret to the lover of letters, to see that nation which once boasted of a Dacier and a Boileau, permitting their works to moulder on the shelves of the booksellers, unregarded and forgotten. We may atribute this strange perversity to the baneful influence of those infidel and atheistical philosophers, which affected alike the moral, the religious, and the intellectual character of the French.

invented of abstracting our studies ; some royal road found out to conduct us to the arts and sciences. This disadvantage arises from the vast accumulation of the objects of knowledge, as the world grows older, and the incessant improvements in every branch of literature and science. If there was enough, in the days of Cicero and Horace, to occupy the mind of the most ardent scholar, what must be the apprehensions of a Roman youth on approaching the extensive and unwieldy fabrick of a modern education. Yet with how much confidence and unconcern is this " labour of life" too often attempted. These remarks we have conceived proper to prefix to a picture we have drawn for the amusement of our readers ; should it be liable to the imputation of a caricature too highly coloured, we hope it will be considered that many traits in it are by no means destitute of an original.

A labourer, whose occupation from his youth had been agriculture, and who had at the age of thirty obtained a comfortable farm in the country, was on a sudden seized with the idea of becoming a man of science. We will not here stop to describe the remonstrances of his friends, nor the ridicule of all his acquaintance. Suffice it to say, they were both equally despised by the infatuated visionary, and his determination was unalterable. He intended still to carry on the business of the farm, amidst the pursuits of literature. He disdained to become a collegian, a character in which he thought it impossible for his mind to have a range, sufficiently extensive to acquire universal knowledge. " What," said he, " shall I suffer myself to be immured in a place, " where they pursue no more than a dozen studies at a " time ? I have no idea of that ' sacred bias,' which foolish " philosophers pretend is implanted in the soul. My mind " was formed for vast acquirements, and my genius is a uni- " versal genius." Thus elated with vanity and ardent with

expectation, our scholar purchased three different treatises upon Staticks, and Sir Isaac Newton's Principia, to begin with. Having heard it somewhere observed, *that the several sciences explain each other*, and being somewhat puzzled to discover the meaning of Sir Isaac's first observation, respecting *air of a double density*, he immediately procured a dissertation upon agriculture, to solve the problem! But finding nothing in this to the purpose, his laudable zeal extended itself through all the works of theology, pharmacy, zoology, metaphysicks, analyticks, geometry, policy, and law, to find out the meaning of *air of a double density*. Of one friend he would borrow a treatise on medicine, of another, on chronology, and of a third, on fortification. He would night and day pour over heraldry, gardening, poetry, and manage, to explore the important secret. He could neither dig it from mineralogy, nor find it in the infinite space of metaphysicks. There was no such notion in logick, nor was it an element in chymistry.

It so happened, that, at the commencement of the study of every science, his wife was obliged to sell an acre of land to support herself and family. His little estate was now all exhausted, and the obstinate lunatick was still determined to find something about *air of a double density*. His consort was obliged to borrow money to support him in the yet unexplored regions of hydrology, phytology, acousticks, algebra, ethicks, opticks, hydrostaticks, mechanicks, &c. &c. This afflicted woman came to him one day, and, with a smile of patience and of love, asked him if he had studied the book, which had laid for fifteen years on the old desk in his apartment. This book, by the way, was a treatise upon pneumaticks, which one of her relations had left in his will as a legacy to her husband. He severely reprimanded her for intruding upon his retirement; at the same time ridiculing her for supposing that a book upon pneumat-

icks had any thing to do with *air*, and immediately renewed his speculations upon sculpture, trades and manufactures, pyrotechny, military arts, astronomy, dialing, geography, and navigation, while his disconsolate wife left the room, praying to heaven, that her husband might be satisfied respecting *air of a double density*.

While the affair went on thus prosperously within, the creditors without could no longer restrain their impatience and indignation. Employment was soon given to the sheriff, who dragged the man of letters, with his family, to prison. But he has philosophy enough to disregard the cries of a miserable wife, and the daily complaints of four hungry children. Although he is yet hardly capable of comprehending the truth of the proposition, *Whatever is, is*, and is still farther from the meaning of *air of a double density*, yet he will strut his prison-room, and tell you of the immense advantages of being a man of science. It makes up the loss of health, wealth, and even of life itself. He often laughs at the situation of a neighbour of his, who, by the arts of honest industry, has acquired a competence for life, gained the respect of all his acquaintances, and enjoys the reputation of being a *well-informed husbandman*. He thinks that his neighbour is groping in miserable ignorance ; but presumptuously avers, that after having gazed so long on the full blaze of science, his own mental eye is rather brightened, than extinguished by its lustre. He will demonstrate to a tittle, that the shortest road to honour, happiness, and wealth, is not through the dull and uniform track of partial application ; on the contrary, that they are only to be acquired by traversing through the desert of universal knowledge, whose innumerable half-beaten paths so agreeably perplex the traveller. To these arguments, there are no opponents so powerful as prison-walls, with which, in fact, are almost all *his* disputations, and which in silence *convict* him of his errour. But he will

not be *convinced;* and still positively concludes, that his own lot is far happier than that of the abovementioned ignorant husbandman, and that his conduct for twenty years past has been more laudable than the other's.

Now if the reader, upon comparing the situations of these two men should happen to make a different conclusion from that of our hero, the moral of this story is sufficiently explained.

ON SOUND.

In the present state of philosophical knowledge, to make pretensions of advancing any thing original in the circle of the sciences, would be exposing ourselves to ridicule, without necessity; or, at best, it would be raising expectations without sufficient foundation. It would be exciting high expectations without sufficient certainty of gratifying them, because it is the felicity of very few, to produce any new discoveries in science. It would be incurring unnecessary ridicule, in case of failure, because treatises on such topicks are not expected to produce much matter entirely new, nor would they be more valuable, if they did; for this would appear as if we were not dealing with facts and knowledge, but with hypotheses and conjecture,and would reduce us to the state of the ancients, among whom every one framed his own system of physicks. Nor is this air of novelty necessary to attract notice; the really wise, or those who are likely to become so, do not expect to meet the fanciful and excentrick knight of romance in a scientifick disquisition, but in general they are well prepared for the real guest. In books of science the writer, who makes the most judicious selection and discovers the most lucid arrangement of facts, experiments, and observations, produces the best work. In

such cases, to borrow from the best preceding authors is no plagiarism, and to profess to do without such assistance is impudence.

If the following observations are familiar to many, they may be new to others. Let those, who have not before been informed, read, and possibly they will not find the knowledge useless ; and let those, who are so well acquainted with the subject, that it gives no pleasure to recal it to mind, lay the book aside : but let them remember, that as the ancient Jews were ruined by their idolatry, when the fathers forgot to relate the pious story of their miraculous deliverance from the Egyptians, as commanded by Moses, and also to enjoin the observation of the passover ; so when the learned will not condescend to repeat their knowledge for the benefit of the rising generation, posterity must a second time resort to the labour of invention, or relapse into ignorance. With no higher pretensions than these, therefore, " Indocti dis- " cant, et ament meminisse periti," we proceed to the projected remarks.

Sound is a subject of curious and entertaining speculalation. The doctrine of the propagation of sound by undulatory motions in the air seems to advance us the nearest to the ultimate cause of sensations in the mind, and to afford us the most satisfactory solution of former difficulties, of any discovery in the departments of science. Here we again find the use of air, the common agent of all our enjoyments. It is not sufficient, that without respirations of this fluid man could not exist for a moment, and that this alone preserves the purity of his food, and nourishes his vegetables ; to this also he must be indebted for the sound which enables him to impart his ideas to fellow-beings and to receive so much pleasure from melody. The modern theory of sound affords opportunity for many curious speculations, in which the ancients, however ready to substitute fancy for fact, could not indulge. They supposed sound to be an actual existence,

in the same manner, as a tree or house, or any object of vision. But since the discovery, that sound is only the sensation produced on the auditory nerve by an undulatory motion in the atmosphere, conveyed to that nerve by the tympanum and labyrinth of the ear, we easily perceive that there can be no such thing as sound, without the organs of hearing.

But though air is commonly considered the medium of conveying sound, yet a large bell, rung under water, has been heard nearly half a mile, by a person also under water; and a small scratch on wood is conveyed, through a long string of timbers, as far as the continuity is preserved. Now this phenomenon may be accounted for, either by supposing the sound conveyed by undulations communicated to the air in the pores of the water and wood, or by supposing the wood and water themselves to be media of conveyance. The latter supposition appears to admit arguments in its favour, though I believe the former is the received opinion.

The experiment, which corroborates the conclusion of Newton and others on the communication of sound, is that of ringing a bell in an exhausted receiver, when little or no noise will be heard; and were perfect exhaustion possible, probably there would be none at all. The consequences are various and interesting.

Should the most terrifick explosion take place, at a small distance from our atmosphere, we should be unable to hear any report. Accordingly, should our earth, as some have imagined, be destined to destruction from some comet, hurled from its orbit, though extraordinary explosions would undoubtedly take place in such a case, we should have no notice of the impending ruin, till the fatal moment. This consideration may well add to the terrours of those, who believe this to be the destiny of our revolving ball of clay.

From the same cause another circumstance is explained. It is well known, that the random of a ball ejected from the mouth of a gun or cannon, bears but a small proportion to

the distance, at which the report is heard ; but it has been supposed, that the volcanick eruptions of the moon have been so violent, as to throw stony substances to the earth, and yet no noise has been heard from the convulsions. The reason of this is, no sound could be transmitted from the moon to the earth, as it lies beyond the boundaries of our air.

We will now see what the established theory of sound will suggest concerning the inhabitants of other worlds. The general supposition is, that the moon and other planets are inhabited, as well as our earth ; but it is pretty well ascertained, that most of those planets have no atmosphere. A question may then arise, if those planetary beings are rational, (and no one could wish to conjecture the contrary) and consequently desire, and are calculated to communicate with each other, what can be their mode of imparting ideas ? It cannot be by sound, for they have no air.—But perhaps we should rest here, and not, like the metaphysicians of the dark ages, plunge into regions beyond what are evidently ultimate facts, and where conjecture can be the only result. It may, however, be serviceable to notice the fact, as it will point out several necessary differences, between the sojourners in other planets, and those who perform an earthly perigrination. The beings of those regions must not only be so made, as to live without inhaling atmosphere ; but, if they associate, must do it in a different manner from the vivâ voce of terrestrial animals. We cannot conclude better, than with the reflection, that the Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator of all worlds, who made all things for his own glory, and gave us faculties for singing his praise in vocal strains, has undoubtedly prepared all his creatures to perform the same just and pleasant service in some manner, most agreeable to his wisdom.

" What though in solemn silence all
" Move round this dark terrestrial ball ;
" In wisdom's ear they all rejoice,
" And utter forth a glorious voice."

POETRY.

TRASLATION

OF A PASSAGE FROM THE BOSTAN OF SADI, AN ORIENTAL EPIC POEM.

THE poet in this place takes occasion, by a kind of allegory, to inveigh against the general indifference of mankind towards the sufferings and misery of their fellows.

* * * * *

'TIS said, one cold autumnal night,
When storms obscured the moon's pale light,
And snow drove eddying round;
King Tagrul a poor traveller met,
Who wearied, fainting, cold, and wet,
Lay shivering on the ground.

Then soft compassion moved the king;
"One moment wait, my slave shall bring
"This mantle which I wear;
"Soon from my palace I will send,
"So cheer thy fainting spirits, friend,
"And banish all thy care."

The storm was cold, the wind was loud,
Torrents descended from the cloud,
And deluged all around;
The king within his dome retires,
And ready servants wake the fires,
And mirth and joy resound.

Here amid pleasure's wild carouse,
The king, unmindful of his vows,
A beauteous slave carest;
Immured in love, he soon forgot
The poor, bewildered traveller's lot,
And pity fled his breast.

E'en the warm mantle, which so late
The traveller, shivering at his gate,
Was taught to expect anon,
Was now for happier scenes designed,
And ruffled by no stormy wind,
O'er fairer shoulders thrown.

But ah! in expectation drear,
Betwixt alternate hope and fear,
Lo, the poor traveller stands;
Neglected and forgotten, long
He listens to the feast and song
Of pleasure's thoughtless bands.

And there unhappy and forlorn
He waits in silence, till the morn
Had brought its wished for light;

At length indignant he exclaims,
As on the castle's lingering flames
He turns his joyless sight.

'O ye, who bask in fortune's ray,
'And through the path of pleasure stray,
'Forgetful of distress;
'No cries of misery reach your ears,
'You wipe away no flowing tears,
'Nor sorrow's sons caress.

'Your night glides on in heedless joy,
'No cares your happiness annoy,
'Who dance around your throne;
'You think not of the wretch like me,
'The homeless child of misery,
'Unsheltered and unknown.

'Thus 'tis with false, ungrateful man;
'For see, yon rested caravan,
'Disposed in revelling bands;
'No care disturbs their thoughtless mind
'For the poor traveller left behind,
'And lost among the sands.

'That wretch too on the faithless wave,
'Yet still within the power to save,
'Excites no pitying sigh,
'For lo, some pampered child of rank,
'Unmoved, stands loitering on the bank,
'And sees the sufferer die.'

"Slacken, ye vigorous youths, your pace,
"Why urge so fast your toilsome race,"
'Exclaims some faint old man,'
"Think of our weakness and our age,
"Nor try so soon to gain the stage
"Where rests the caravan."

'Thou, who within thy glittering car,
'That strikes the astonished eye from far,
'Sleep'st quiet and secure,
'Oh think on him, who, faint and slow,
'Through desert wilds is forced to go,
'And every toil endure.

'Thus smoothly as you're borne along,
'Amid the wandering, vulgar throng,
'Some fainting wretch you meet,
'Whose piteous cry assails your ear,
'And mid his unavailing prayer,
'Dies famished at your feet.'

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